

# ARCHITECT

MIDDLE EAST

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The lighthouse inspired sculpted Al Nadi viewing tower

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for 2014

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## Meet the judges

Cristiano Luchetti and Salim Hussain

**C**ristiano Luchetti is a former architect who now lectures in the profession at the American University of Sharjah who feels a successful architect must combine many disciplines.

He says: "[Roman architect Marcus] Vitruvius said that the 'true' architect must be competent in literature and history, be skilled in drawing and a good mathematician. An architect should also take care of his musical and philosophical knowledge, be aware of medical science, law, even astrophysics.

"In the end the word architect comes from the Greek *arkhi* and *tekton*, master and builder. The notion of architect as poet and mathematician is a duality which reminds me of a universal contraposition between two alternative forces which defines the whole."

Head of design at Brewer Smith Brewer Gulf, Salim Hussain, who is also an academic, says architecture can turn philosophical concepts into bricks, mortar and concrete

He explains: "An architect should be a mathematician, poet, philosopher but also the master builder. As the master builder, the expression and manifestation of all of the philosophy is given physical form. In translating the idea into built form, I believe architecture becomes elevated above the other arts.

"Architecture is about more than just building and it is that 'more than' bit that I am interested in. I believe you should never dismiss any idea until you have looked at it and inspected it. It may be absurd but it often leads you somewhere that is fantastic and perfect for the problem."



↑  
Academic Cristiano Luchetti.



↑  
BSBG's Salim Hussain



## Meet the judges

Holley Chant and Bart Leclercq

**H**olley Chant is executive director of corporate sustainability at KEO International Consultants and is a former winner of a Middle East Architect Award.

She said: "I like to see architecture that has a sense of the possibility that lives can be transformed by living and working in that particular building."

"As a judge I will be looking at the sustainability of a project and all of its subsets as well as good real estate fundamentals which are also part of economic sustainability."

"I feel that facilities management is an important aspect of design which should be addressed from the start of a project as well as good masterplanning. I also love to see real innovation in a project."

Bart Leclercq is senior technical director at engineering firm WSP and has been a judge at the awards on several previous occasions.

He has been involved with a number of prominent projects in the region, including the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain which opened this year.

Leclercq says in-depth submissions and detail are the way for top projects to be recognised.

"What I really like is when you can see, by looking at images and schematics and reading the text, the amount of detail an engineer or architect has put together."

"Then, you can see at a glance the thought process they have undergone and that the submission is clear and well presented with a sense of quality."



↑  
Holley Chant of  
KEO.



↑  
Bart Leclercq from  
WSP.





## Meet the judges

Pedram Rad, Sumaya Dabbagh and Stephan Frantzen

**T**he relationship between the design of a building and how it is used is one of the major interests of Pedram Rad, of U + A Architects a well-established practice which has just moved into new premises in Dubai.

The company has won award at both the Middle East Architect events and also at the Commercial Interior Design Awards – most recently this year.

Rad said: "I always look very closely at the characteristics of a buildings and how it is used – whether it be a hotel project or a residential design.

"The functionality of a structure is obviously very important whatever the usage and they should both be interconnected in order for the design to work to its best."

Sumaya Dabbagh, who runs her own practice, is also the Gulf area Hon Sec for the Royal Institute of British Architects, a body which is committed to promoting excellence across the entire design field.

She is a judge at for the first time at this year's awards and said she is very much looking forward to seeing the best people and projects across the region showcased.

"Sensitivity towards the region and its culture is very important to me when I look at how a building is designed," Dabbagh said. "It can be the case that the design team will try to hard and for me, quite often, less is more."

Stephan Frantzen, director at P&T architects, completes the judging panel. He said an "integrated approach" is the way forward for design with sustainability a vital factor.



↑  
U + A architect  
Pedram Rad



↑  
RIBA Hon Sec  
Sumaya Dabbagh



↑  
Stephan Frantzen  
P&T Architects.



# Making the MEA Awards happen this time around

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It is human nature to compete, so this event helps to bring out the best in architects. As well, it gives their designs and them personally the chance to earn the recognition of their peers. We have an extremely satisfying relationship with both Middle East Architect magazine and the awards and that is why we are continuing it for the third year in succession." – Chairman Nawab Shaji Ul Mulk



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The main reason we are involved in the awards is the event encourages architects as a community to showcase their work. They are also a platform which will allow architects and engineers to get together and communicate ideas." – Managing partner Emad Jaber



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The awards themselves reflect excellence in different categories – so many areas of expertise can be recognised and rewarded. The work of architects can be of great benefit." – CEO Jamil Jaddalah



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Nora recognise the MEA awards as an appreciation of the vision of those at the forefront of innovation and design in the region - who are pushing the limitations and securing sustainability and aesthetics for future generations. It is of extreme importance to recognise excellence in design, in order to maintain its significance and encourage those who have excelled, also those who continuously strive to keep architecture relevant, functional and beautiful" – MENA region manager Steve McFadden

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The awards are this month in Dubai.





# introduction

Nick Ames meets Sumaya Dabbagh, architect and RIBA committee member who emphasises the positive aspect a high standard of design can have on everyday life

PHOTOGRAPHY SHARON HARIDAS

**A**n understanding of culture and the nuances of daily life in the Middle East is fundamental to the work of architect Sumaya Dabbagh.

The current Hon Sec of the Gulf Chapter of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) she runs her own practice, based in Dubai.

"I set up on my own after working for a series of large companies," said Dabbagh. "I wanted to break free from the limitations I was encountering. I felt there was a shortfall in the understanding of the region. There was a gap in what people thought the Middle East needed and what is really necessary."

"Architecture should be something that makes a difference and makes a positive impact on people – the satisfaction of the end-users is what makes a project complete."

Born in Jeddah, Dabbagh moved to the UK at the age of 13 and studied architecture at Bath University. After a series of placements in nearby Bristol, she worked in London for international companies such as Arup and in Paris, before returning to the Middle East.

"I had adapted to British culture at quite a young age, but I wanted to find the answers to certain questions concerning my own identity, - who I was" she said.

"I chose to live and work in Dubai because it offered a diverse mix of Middle Eastern and western culture"

"In my work I like to explore the intangible element of space – what makes a building what it is?"

"I am fascinated by how concrete, bricks and mortar can affect the feeling of a building. For instance – how can an entrance create a feeling of either welcome or intimidation" ●



## BIOGRAPHY

**Sumaya Dabbagh chose architecture because it combined art and science in a way that was relevant to people. She was one of the founding members of RIBA because of its commitment to high standards. "Anything built can last 50 years," Dabbagh said. "It will have an impact on people, on the street, on the city and on the environment. That is a responsibility which should not be undertaken lightly."**



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SUMAYA DABBAGH

